

TOPIC: REVISIONS TO CCHE POLICY I, PART F: ADMISSION STANDARDS POLICY - GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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I. SUMMARY

Beginning in January 2014, a new, revamped General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency exam was introduced. Our current admission standards policy recognizes scores from the previous versions of GED (2002 and 1998). Institutions are currently receiving applications from students with the new 2014 GED assessment scores. The admission standards policy needs to be updated with scores for the GED 2014 to give institutions guidance on how to treat these scores.

DHE is gathering information to update the current admission standards policy with the new scores. The initial recommendation is to use a score of 150 or above in each of the four content areas until December 2014. By that time additional data will be available about performance rates and the new GED 2014 test scores. In January 2015, the Department and CCHE will be better informed to make a final determination on what scores should reside in the admission standards policy to ensure the most student success.

As of right now, there are two other high school equivalency exams being used across the nation, HiSet exam and the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) exam. DHE is gathering information about these exams so the Department can make recommendations for Action to the Commission at a future CCHE meeting. Students from other states will be coming to Colorado institutions having taken these other state approved high school equivalency exams and institutions will need guidance on how to use these scores. CCHE will need to determine admission scores for these assessments. CCHE will need to set these scores in the next few months.

II. BACKGROUND

The GED provides an opportunity for persons who have not graduated from high school to earn a high school equivalency diploma.

New assessment scores

The performance standards for the 2014 GED test were established based on performance data generated through a standardization and norming study done by Westat in 2013. The 2014 GED test is primarily computer-based and includes four content area tests 1) reasoning through

language arts (RLA), 2) mathematical reasoning (Math), 3) science, and 4) social studies. The minimum benchmark (the “*Passing Standard*”) indicates the minimum level of performance necessary to meet the requirements for a high school-level credential. Attainment of the *Passing Standard* in all content areas is intended to result in the awarding of a high school equivalency credential. Passing the 4-module test battery requires test-takers to earn a score of 150 on *each* content-area test in order to earn a high school equivalency credential.

Three Performance Levels

The 2014 GED test supports three performance levels (see attachment A for additional information on performance level descriptors).

- **Performance Level 1** is associated with scores below the GED Test *Passing Standard* (100 to 149 scaled score points),
- **Performance Level 2** is associated with scores at or above the *Passing Standard* (150 – 169 scaled score points).
- **Performance Level 3**, the highest level, is associated with performance indicative of college and career-readiness known as the *GED Score with Honors* (170 scaled score points and above).

The 2002 GED had a compensatory system. Students were required to attain a minimum score of 410 for each module, but were also required an average score of 450 across all the modules to pass the total battery of tests. In Colorado, 550 or above is needed for admission to a selective or highly selective institution while a 450 or above is necessary for a moderately selective and modified open institution.

In the 2014 GED a student must to obtain the passing score of 150 or above on each individual content area. This is considered sufficient to pass the total battery of tests and achieve a high school equivalency credential. The GED Score with Honors level (170 or above on each individual content area) represents knowledge and skills that are indicative of successful performance outcomes in first-year credit-bearing courses in postsecondary education programs.

Standardization and Norming Study for GED 2014

Westat conducted a standardization and norming study (SNS) and had three main purposes:

- 1) To determine the base scale and percentile ranks on each of the GED content area sub-tests;
- 2) To establish the performance benchmark for the GED Test Passing Standard on each of the four content area sub-tests; and
- 3) To establish the performance benchmark for the GED Score with Honors (representing career- and college-readiness) and the reportable feedback zones.

Westat designed the sample to represent and model the 3.3 million students in the full graduating class of 2013. Westat conducted sampling in 100 counties across the United States, and over 6,500 high school students applied to participate. Students from 46 states and the District of Columbia participated. This table presents the pass and fail rates of the high school diploma recipients in the SNS, based on the final cut score of 150 scaled score points for each of the

individual content area tests. Due to the elimination of the compensatory model, the focus in 2014 and beyond will be on passing the individual content area tests.

Pass vs. Fail (SNS Sample)	RLA	Math	Science	Social Studies
Pass	69%	72%	73%	67%
Fail	31%	28%	27%	33%

Information obtained from GED testing services, 2014 GED Test Performance Standards
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/458b4f8953ae91f6eb6959b34156bac9.pdf>

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

DHE staff met with staff from the Colorado Department of Education, and higher education institutions' admission and research representatives regarding setting the new assessment scores. GED purposefully did not establish a crosswalk or score concordance table, because the 2014 GED version is significantly different from the 2002 GED version and measures different skills. Information comparing the content of the versions and how they relate is available but many institutional representatives felt additional student score data is necessary to determine a final score for the policy.

Previously, on the 2002 version, moderately selective or modified open institutions used a 450 or above, while selective and highly selective used a 550 or above. With the new 2014 assessment, a 150 or above is passing in each content area and passing with honors is 170 or above and also designates that student as college and career-ready in each content area (please see attachment B for additional information on scale and content descriptions for each version of the GED). As a temporary policy change, the Department believes that CCHE should set a score of 150 or above (for each individual content area) as the appropriate starting point for all Colorado public institutions to begin to consider applicants for admission. Once additional data is available about students' performance on the 2014 GED assessment, DHE will revisit this policy and make final policy recommendations. This is anticipated to happen around December 2014.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a discussion item. It will be an action item for the April CCHE meeting.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

§23- C.R.S. 23-1-113 (2013)

23-1-113. Commission directive - admission standards for baccalaureate and graduate institutions of higher education - policy - definitions

(1) (a) The commission shall establish and the governing boards shall implement academic

admission standards for first-time freshmen and transfer students at all state-supported baccalaureate and graduate institutions of higher education in the state. The commission shall establish and may subsequently review and amend the standards after consultation with the governing boards of institutions. The academic admission standards for students who do not have in-state status, as determined pursuant to section 23-7-103, shall equal or exceed those established for determining admission of in-state students.

(b) The standards established for first-time admitted freshman students shall use a combination of high school academic performance indicators and national assessment test scores for eligibility criteria. The academic performance indicators may include, but are not limited to, grade point average, class rank, and content standard performance level assessments. The criteria established and the specified performance levels shall be consistent with the role and mission established for each state-supported institution of higher education. In considering the high school academic performance indicators, the commission and the governing boards may take into account the rigor of a student's high school academic preparation and the academic content of the courses taken. In lieu of the established statewide criteria, each governing board may use additional criteria for up to twenty percent of the freshmen students annually admitted to each institution under the governing board's control. Students who meet the minimum criteria for admission are not guaranteed admission to the institution to which they have applied, but they are eligible for consideration.

Attachment A: 2014 GED Test Performance Level Descriptors

Attachment B: Score Scale and Content Descriptions for the GED tests